

MICHAEL BAZZETT

Solitude

The notes murmur and stir,
moving like a bag blown across a field, touching
down only between gusts

and if you looked through the doorway and saw the girl on the bench
you'd probably be surprised that she
is the one drawing such sounds from the piano in the front room,

its endless teeth always waiting
beneath that dark and polished lip.
She lifts the lid and plays while the cat watches,
green eyes narrowing into slits as it approaches

sleep or perhaps bliss—its expression as inconfundible as the music
or the sun falling through the window—
there are dust motes floating in that shaft of light, stirred by the music in
the air

and I know exactly how the cat feels,
lying there in the shaded room as it grows warmer outside,
but I'm not sure you do—

which is a problem, frankly.
You're probably still hung up on inconfundible,
which I'll admit is a poet word if ever I've heard one,
but what if I told you it's precisely

the right word and falls flat only because you don't happen to speak
Spanish?

You're going to insist
that I should have signposted it for you
through the use of italics, as is the convention,

but what if every time I challenge you a bit
I lapse into italics? Wouldn't you'd feel as if I were talking
down to you, from my incredibly ornate chair on a raised platform,

or, to put it another way, my *throne*.
The fact is, it's too late for italics now—
you've already read the word twice without them,
and if I were to go back to that room, and the sunlight and the music
and the girl

and somehow change it, right behind your very eyes,
that would clearly violate incontrovertible laws
of time and space, revealing powers I'm not ready to share.

Consider for a moment
what would be demanded of me by a hungry populace,
how I would be commandeered,
all the petty concerns that would be laid at my feet:

“Mistakes were made, my youth was misspent, please
unmarry me, allow me to erase what I spoke in anger, why couldn't
she just be
alive for one more day?”

You see the difficulty.
These are not powers to be treated lightly,
and I am unprepared to enter such a realm.
I would need a cape, a suit of invulnerability,

perhaps a fortress of solitude,
and even then I'd still be as lost and alone as that young girl playing piano,
not certain what was moving me, not even a cat to keep me company.